Numb. CCCCIV.

The SPECTATOR.

Continuo has leges æternaque fœdera certis
Impoſuit natura locis. Virg.

Friday, June 13. 1712.

NAture does nothing in vain; the Creator of the Univerſe has appointed every thing to a certain Uſe and Purpoſe, and determined it to a ſettled Courſe and of Action, from which, if it in the leaſt it becomes unfit to anſwer thoſe Ends for was deſigned. In like Manner is it in the s of Society, the civil Oeconomy is a Chain as well as the natural; and in ſe the Breach but of one Link puts the into ſome Diſorder. It is, I think, pretty at moſt of the Abſurdity and Redicule we h in the World, is generally owing to the ent Affectation of excelling in Characters not fit for, and for which Nature never them.

Man has one or more Qualities which he him uſeful both to himſelf and others: ver fails of pointing them out, and while m continues under her Guardianſhip, ſhe him on in his Way, and then offers herſelf ide in what remains of the Journey; if he in that Courſe, he can hardly miſcarry: makes good her Engagements; for as ſhe omiſes what ſhe is not able to perform, ſo fails of performing what ſhe promiſes. Misfortune is, Men deſpiſe what they may of, and affect what they are not fit for; hon themſelves already poſſeſs'd of what inclined them to, and ſo bend all their to excell in what is out of their Reach: deſtroy the Uſe of their natural Talents, Manner as covetous Men do their Repoſe; they can enjoy no Satisfaction they have, becauſe of the abſurd Inclinati- are poſſeſſed with for what they have not. had good Senſe, a great Memory, and a capable of the cloſeſt Application: there was no Profeſſion in which *Cle-* not have made a very good Figure; ſatisfy him, he takes up an unaccount- els for the Character of a fine Gentle- Thoughts are bent upon this, inſtead a Diſſection, frequenting the Courts of udying the Fathers. *Cleanthes* reads ces, dreſſes, and ſpends his Time in ooms, inſtead of being a good Lawyer, Phyſician; *Cleanthes* is a downright Cox- will remain to all that knew him a con- Example of Talents miſapplied. It is to ation the World owes its whole Race of s: Nature in her whole Drama never drew art; ſhe has ſometimes made a Fool, but a is always of a Man's own making, by ap- is Talents otherwiſe than Nature deſigned, bears an high Reſentment for being put Courſe, and never fails of taking her on thoſe that do ſo. Oppoſing her Tendency in the Application of a Man's Parts, has the ſame Succeſs as declining from her Courſe in the Production of Vegetables; by the Aſſiſtance of Art and an hot Bed, we may poſſibly extort an unwilling Plant, or an untimely Sallad; but how weak, how taſteleſs and inſipid? Juſt as inſipid as the Poetry of *Valerio*: *Valerio* had an univerſal Character, was genteel, had Learning, thought juſtly, ſpoke correctly; 'twas believed there was nothing in which *Valerio* did not excell; and 'twas ſo far true, that there was but one; *Valerio* had no Genius for Poetry, yet he's reſolved to be a Poet; he writes Verſes, and takes great Pains to convince the Town, that *Valerio* is not that extraordinary Perſon he was taken for.

If Men would be content to graft upon Nature, and aſſiſt her Operations, what mighty Effects might we expect? *Tully* would not ſtand ſo much alone in Oratory, *Virgil* in Poetry, or *Cæſar* in War. To build upon Nature, is laying the Foundation upon a Rock; every thing diſpoſes its ſelf into Order as it were of Courſe, and the whole Work is half done as ſoon as undertaken. *Cicero*'s Genius inclined him to Oratory, *Virgil*'s to follow the Train of the Muſes; they piouſly obeyed the Admonition, and were rewarded. Had *Virgil* attended the Bar, his modeſt and ingenuous Virtue would ſurely have made but a very indifferent Figure; and *Tully*'s declamatory Inclination would have been as uſeleſs in Poetry. Nature, if left to her ſelf, leads us on in the beſt Courſe, but will do nothing by Compulſion and Conſtraint; and if we are not ſatisfied to go her Way, we are always the greateſt Sufferers by it.

Wherever Nature deſigns a Production, ſhe always diſpoſes Seeds proper for it, which are as abſolutely neceſſary to the Formation of any moral or intellectual Excellence, as they are to the Being and Growth of Plants; and I know not by what Fate and Folly it is, that Men are taught not to reckon him equally abſurd that will write Verſes in Spite of Nature, with that Gardiner that ſhould undertake to raiſe a Junquil or Tulip without the Help of their reſpective Seeds.

As there is no good or bad Quality that does not affect both Sexes, ſo it is not to be imagined but the fair Sex muſt have ſuffered by an Affectation of this Nature, at leaſt as much as the other: The ill Effect of it is in none ſo conſpicuous as in the two oppoſite Characters of *Cælia* and *Iras*; *Cælia* has all the Charms of Perſon, together with an abundant Sweetneſs of Nature, but wants Wit, and has a very ill Voice; *Iras* is ugly and ungenteel, but has Wit and good Senſe: If *Cælia* would be ſilent, her Beholders would adore her; if *Iras* would talk, her Hearers would admire her; but *Cælia*'s Tongue runs inceſſantly, while *Iras* gives herſelf ſilent Airs and ſoft Languors; ſo that 'tis difficult to perſwade

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ones ſelf that *Cælia* has Beauty and *Iras* Wit: Each neglects her own Excellence, and is ambitious of the other's Character; *Iras* would be thought to have as much Beauty as *Cælia*, and *Cælia* as much Wit as *Iras*.

The great Misfortune of this Affectation is, that Men not only loſe a good Quality, but alſo contract a bad one: They not only are unfit for what they were deſigned, but they aſſign themſelves to what they are not fit for; and inſtead of making a very good Figure one Way, make a very ridiculous one another. If *Semanthe* would have been ſatisfied with her natural Complexion, ſhe might ſtill have been celebrated by the Name of the Olive Beauty; but *Semanthe* has taken up an Affectation to White and Red, and is now diſtinguiſh'd by the Character of the Lady that paints ſo well. In a Word, could the World be reform'd to the Obedience of that fam'd Dictate, *Follow Nature*, which the Oracle of *Delphos* pronounc'd to *Cicero* when he conſulted what Courſe of Studies he ſhould purſue, we ſhould ſee almoſt every Man as eminent in his proper Sphere as *Tully* was in his, and ſhould in a very ſhort Time find Impertinence and Affectation baniſh'd from among the Women, and Coxcombs and falſe Characters from among the Men. For my Part, I could never conſider this prepoſterous Repugnancy to Nature any otherwiſe, than not only as the greateſt Folly, but alſo one of the moſt heinous Crimes, ſince it is a direct Oppoſition to the Diſpoſition of Providence, and, (as *Tully* expreſſes it) like the Sin of the Giants, an actual Rebellion againſt Heaven.

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